

Colonel Ann Wright

Mary Ann Wright is a former US Army Colonel and retired US State Department official. She is most noted for the exceptional combination of her government service background with her active opposition to US foreign policies in Iraq and Afghanistan, to Israeli policies concerning Palestinians and other social injustices. She resigned her post at the State Department on the eve of “Shock & Awe” (The 2003 invasion of Iraq).

Born in 1947 and raised in Bentonville, Arkansas she attended the University of Arkansas, earning a degree in law before entering the US Army. Later she attended the US Naval War College in Newport, Rhode Island, earning a master’s degree in National Security Affairs. She spent 13 years in active duty in the US Army and 16 years in the US Army Reserves, rising to the rank of Colonel.

In 1987, Wright joined the Foreign Service of the US State Department, serving in a number of US Embassies, including in Somalia, Afghanistan, Uzbekistan, Granada, Nicaragua and others. After the US invasion of Afghanistan in 2001 she helped set up the US Embassy in Kabul and served as Deputy Chief of Mission.

Wright’s transformation from career military officer and participant in US foreign policy objectives to full-time active opposition was a gradual one. During her service in Somalia in the early 1990s she spoke out against the US efforts to assassinate Somali rebel leaders with air strikes. She submitted her letter of resignation from the US State Department on March 19, 2003, the day before “Shock & Awe,” the US invasion of Iraq. In the letter her stated reasons for resignation were not only the invasion of Iraq but US policies as per the Israeli/Palestinian conflict and the “lack of effort” in the peace process on the part of the Bush administration.

After her government service Wright threw herself into full-fledged activism against US war policies. She lectured often and wrote numerous articles on US foreign policy and other issues. In August 2005 she teamed up with anti-war activist Cindy Sheehan and helped organize the Camp Casey protest encampment outside George Bush’s ranch in Crawford, Texas. She has been arrested and detained numerous times by authorities in Washington and elsewhere, often willingly for acts of civil disobedience. On several occasions she attended House and Senate Foreign Affairs Committee meetings and was ejected from the proceedings for vocal disruption. She has also worked with Code Pink activist and leader Medea Benjamin.

During the Israeli attack on Gaza in December 2008 Wright became more sharply vocal in her criticism of Israeli policies and US support for them. In 2009 she became a leading member of the steering committee for the Gaza Freedom March protest on January 1, 2010. In May 2010 she participated in the Gaza Freedom Flotilla as a passenger aboard the US ship the Challenger and, like all the other passengers, was detained by the Israeli Defense Force after the deadly Israeli commando attack.

Currently, Wright is on a whirlwind tour of the US to generate support and financing for the next Gaza Freedom Flotilla, scheduled to depart for Gaza later this year with desperately need supplies for Gaza reconstruction. She will appear at a benefit dinner at the Tabernacle Church at 3700 Chestnut St. in Philadelphia on September 10 at 6:30 pm.

Wright has co-authored with Susan Dixon a book entitled “Dissent, Voices of Conscience.”